

FURY FOCUS

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4/73 CAV
in Paktika



from the sky

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On the cover



A medic with 4th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment provides medical treatment to an Afghan boy, April 7, in Paktika Province. (Photo by Pfc. Micah E. Clare/Task Force Fury PAO.)

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Fury 6: Families are the rock we lean on

Wow! It has been three months since we have taken over from Spartan and the train keeps rolling. The month of March brought with it great success in terms of building the team with our Afghan brothers and strengthening our formations in terms of effectiveness and flexibility. You have heard me say it before, "we're not there yet," but thanks to the great efforts of every member of this task force, we are closer then we were last month and great strides ahead from just three months ago when we arrived.

March has also brought great sorrow and sacrifice. Our team lost two paratroopers from 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment and one from 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, to hostile acts by the insurgents in the form of improvised explosive devices and landmines. Our Afghan National Security Forces brothers had more than 20 killed in numerous attacks across the area of operations. As the command sergeant major and I complete our battlefield circulation, we see the impact the deaths of our fellow paratroopers have had on our formations. However, this did not affect us the way the enemy had hoped. Our Soldiers honor and respect the leadership, actions and sacrifice of our fallen heroes and they have applied that to themselves. I thank all members of the team who have played a part in the planning, resourcing and execution of the ceremonies to remember those we have fallen to this war on terror and oppression.

As this Task Force continues to work with the ANSF and Islamic Republic of Afghanistan officials, we are seeing real progress in the expansion, reach and capabilities of the IROA. All throughout RC East, progress can be seen in the form of roads, projects, infrastructure, and presence of the IROA. Yes the enemy has noticed and has taken desperate measures to attempt to bring fear and intimidation to the people and our forces. They are cowards and they know they cannot face the people, the ANSF or this task force. This is why they use IEDs, suicide bombers, and vehicle-bourne improvised explosive devices. Their target is anyone who



Fury 6
COL Martin P. Schweitzer

does not bow down to their oppression.

I want to take a moment to address a very deadly safety issue, negligent discharges. Sadly, our Spartan brothers lost one Soldier and another was seriously injured due to this lack of oversight and individual attention to detail. Every negligent discharge is preventable! Every Soldier, noncommissioned officer and commissioned officer in this formation must enforce weapons safety and discipline. We owe that to each other and to our families. We are at war; but to lose even one Soldier to a lack of discipline, a poor risk assessment, or simple negligence of duty is unacceptable, period.

Team rest assured our presence and sacrifice here has not been in vain or forgotten. Afghan Government leaders at all levels have contacted our commanders to share in our grief, give their condolences, as well as express their gratitude to the American people for bringing hope and a true future for the children of Afghanistan. They are committed and gaining in capacity everyday. There will be setbacks and at times mistakes made, but together with our Afghan teammates, we will overcome these challenges and provide security and opportunity for all of Afghanistan.

Lastly, I would like to thank the families. You have made and continue to make great sacrifices on behalf of your military loved ones. Words cannot express the gratitude our nation and people owe you. You ask for very little and give so much. The recent decision to extend tours to 15 months is especially hard on family members.

We are even more grateful for the work you do every day to keep the home together and spread the message of the hope and freedom your husband, wife, son, or daughter are bringing to the Afghan people.

The actions of all members of this team to include our family members are nothing short of amazing and heroic.

All the way! Fury from the Sky!

Fury 6

Fury 9: Congratulations new NCOs, Mothers

Again another month has come and passed in our deployment and I hope all the families are taking advantage of the warm weather back home.

During the month of May we will be sending some of our noncommissioned officers to the Sergeant Audie Murphy Board at the various Forward Operation Base's we live in, and we wish them all the best in achieving success.

There have been a lot of new NCO's added to our ranks from within the task force and troopers are excited about becoming NCO's!

I'd also like to remind everyone that the talk of extentions and other challenges we face are easier to receive when we know our families and friends are supporting us back home, continuing to maintain the homefront!

This month is a special month for a lot of our hero's here and back home; Mother's Day!



Fury 9
CSM Richard Flowers

Your battlefield is tougher than anything most of us face here in harms way, but each day you mom's get the job done and make it happen.

Even mom's that are deployed are receiving the recognition they deserve, for they too have children back home who are proud they serve "America's Guard of Honor," and that is what we must do during these challenging times.

Lastly, it is with great sadness, that we remember the lives of three of our paratroopers. Sgt. David A. Stephens, Staff Sgt. Casey D. Combs and Sgt. Alexander Van Aalten are heroes who we'll remember for the rest of our days. I want their families to know; you are in our daily thoughts and prayers.

Again I say godspeed and take care, and we all appreciate everything that you do.

All the way! Fury from the Sky!

Fury 9

To belt or not to belt? It's not really a question

Hans Balke

Task Force Fury Safety

Seatbelts? Who needs stinking seatbelts?

Who needs to secure their equipment? We're in a combat environment!!!

It'll slow me down getting out of the vehicle when we make enemy contact. It may also trap me during a roll over; and much more important, it's so darn uncomfortable!

I need that extra can of ammo now! I'm an excellent driver and can react to anything!

We wouldn't need seatbelts in a combat environment or tie down our equipment if somehow the laws of physics didn't apply.

If somehow you could brace yourself right before impact, if somehow you could hold yourself in your seat during a roll over, after of course pulling the gunner in.

Then you would hold all the loose ammo cans and other equipment not tied down to prevent the items from hitting you in the head while at the same time keeping from hitting your head on the roof or keeping your face off the windshield.

You don't want to survive a roll over and get killed by a wayward ammo can!

It really doesn't matter if you're a good driver when there are so many bad drivers out there on these roads.

Everybody knows a driver's test is evidently not required in order to get a license in Afghanistan.

Despite the overwhelming evidence that seatbelts help prevent serious injury and even death, there are still a number of agnostics out there. I'm not one of them.

I know for a fact that a seatbelt saved my life and my ex-girlfriend's, but alas that's another story.

According to an expert panel commissioned by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "NHTSA research has identified different psychological reactions to safety belt use among fulltime and part-time users. Full-time users feel discomfort if they are not buckled up; thus, not wearing a safety belt leads to anxiety. Part-time users do not feel the same anxiety in response to not wearing a safety belt. Instead, part-time users often express fatalistic beliefs or utilize other defense mechanisms (e.g., repression, denial, or rationalization) to suppress thoughts about the consequences of being in a crash."

While they are few and far between, there are occasions where the use of a seatbelt would not be the right thing to do, but not wearing a belt should be based on weighing the risks versus the benefits and making an informed decision.

The benefits should outweigh the risks, but these occasions should be the exception and not the norm.

An informed decision can only be made if you have all the relevant facts. It should not be left up to personal choice and especially not to comfort.

It's not very comforting to do a face plant into bullet resistant glass at 20 mph.

The IBA is not very comfortable either but I don't think anyone would want to get into a firefight without one, because just like the seatbelt it's protection.

Here's a fact: an accident at 30mph releases four times the energy than one at 15mph.

It's like falling from a three story building. I must be getting more seasoned, but I can't fall off a three story building and land in the push-up position without rearranging my face.

I know this for a fact without having to try it.

Here's another fact, according to a report on the U.S. Army Combat Readiness website, "in the past 30 months, the Army has lost 63 troopers in 134 Army motor vehicles due to rollovers. In fiscal year 2005, the Army had 81 accidents involving rollovers resulting in 33 fatalities. In fiscal year 2006, there were 45 rollovers and 19 fatalities. These are Army motor vehicle rollovers and do not include personally owned vehicle rollovers."

An interesting comment was made by a Combined Task Force Fury staff sergeant who survived a roll over with no injuries to himself or his crew.

He said when the roll over happened they immediately went into roll-over-drill mode. However when the roll over was, well over, they were in total darkness.

They had practiced the HEAT roll over drill during daylight but it happened at night, a totally different environment.

Nobody panicked and everybody got out safe but the lesson learned is to practice in as much the same conditions and environment as the actual mission.

Drive at night and practice the HEAT trainer during limited visibility.

This scenario can then be made more realistic by incorporating medical training, such as the "bleeding dummy" and calling for a MEDEVAC.

This can be done through different means but just make sure that brigade is in the loop if you're planning on calling for an exercise MEDEVAC. We don't want to further confuse an already confusing situation.

It should be Standard Operating Procedure that before ANY convoy or vehicle movement the convoy commander addresses seat belt use during the brief or prior to starting.

However this is a finger drill if not actively enforced prior to departure by the troop commander or senior occupant of the vehicle.

Seatbelts save lives, it is a fact.

Please, buckle up.

Do it for yourself, your combat buddy and do it for your family.

This year to date the Army has lost 11 Troopers due to rollovers. Let's not make 12 your unlucky number.

You can ***"BE SAFE"*** if,
Standards Are Fully Enforced

Fury paratroopers field, test new sniper rifle

Spc. Matthew Leary

Task Force Fury PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan — The sound of gunshots echoed at the small-arms range, April 19, at Forward Operating Salerno, and to the normal observer it would have seemed to be nothing out of the ordinary.

A closer look at the weapons being fired, the slightly elongated barrels, nondescript camouflage tan paint, and oversized scope, would serve as an immediate testament that this was not your ordinary weapons qualification range.

Soldiers from Task Force Fury fielded a new sniper rifle, the XM110 semi-automatic sniper system (SASS), the first unit to receive the new weapons system in a combat zone.

The new rifle has several new features, but the most prominent is the improved rate of fire it offers.

"It's semi-automatic, so it allows for rapid re-engagement of targets," said Army Staff Sgt. Jason R. Terry, a sniper instructor with the U.S. Army Sniper School, about the XM110 SASS's new features.

Older style rifles, such as the commonly used M24 Sniper Weapon System, were bolt-action weapons that required the sniper to manually feed another round into the chamber after each shot. The automatic firing capabilities of the SASS will cut down on the lag time in between shots, Terry said.

Snipers have a unique role within the Army, going out in pairs and conducting reconnaissance and providing long-range precision fire in support of missions, Terry said.

Because of their movement in small groups, snipers focus on being undetected by the enemy, said Army Pfc. Joel D. Dulashanti, a sniper with Troop C, 4th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division.

For this reason, the SASS has also been fitted with a suppressor, a metal tube that fits over the barrel of the rifle and significantly reduces the signature blast, Terry said. No longer is there the obligatory loud crack of the shot or small cloud of dust rising off the ground from the gases emitted from the barrel.

This advancement will make locating snipers in the field, even after they have fired a shot, difficult for enemy forces.

Terry and a team of other experts trav-



Photo by Spc. Matthew Leary/Task Force Fury PAO

Pfc. Joel D. Dulashanti, a sniper with 4th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, jots down notes as a spotter for another sniper during their training on the new XM110 Semi-automatic Sniper System held at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan.

eled along with the equipment, providing training on the SASS and delivering the equipment to the units.

"We brought them into the country with us, and they'll stay here," Terry said.

The three-day training course on the SASS was designed to familiarize the Soldiers with the new weapons system. Most of those in the class had already been to the US Army Sniper School, so the introduction of the new weapon merely augmented the snipers arsenal, Terry said.

The training consisted of in class instruction and time spent on the range, said Dulashanti.

"We learned to maintain and operate the weapon, what we can fix ourselves and what we can't," he said.

Since snipers are a limited resource, ensuring the equipment is operable is imperative, said Kyle P. Gleason, an equipment specialist with Tank Automotive and Armorer Command. Gleason is handling the maintenance portion of the class while the SASS is distributed here in Afghanistan.

"I teach them the basics," Gleason said. "Here's your rifle, here's what it can do, and here's how you take care of it."

If a weapon malfunctions or a component of it breaks, it is a serious loss of support to the unit. The training addressed the issue of how to determine what level of maintenance on the weapon is needed, and who is capable of providing it, Dulashanti said. Soldiers

were also cautioned on particularly fragile parts that need to be carefully maintained due to the fact only the manufacturer can repair them.

The training provides a better understanding of the weapon and reassured the Soldiers of its use, said Spc. Aaron J. Fillmore, an infantryman with Troop C, 4-73rd Cav., who has been assigned to the sniper section.

"I think it's a pretty simple gun to maintain and operate," he said. "It was good to get the familiarization with the weapon."

Getting the Soldiers comfortable with the SASS was the exact purpose of the training, Terry said.

And even though it is the first time the SASS has been distributed and trained on downrange, the overall mission was a success, Gleason said.

"It's been absolutely astounding," said Gleason. "We got here and they were all for the training."

In the end, it's about providing competent and accurate fire and reconnaissance for maneuver units while they conduct operations here, said Army Staff Sgt. Jose L. Galvan, a sniper instructor from the U.S. Army Sniper School. The semi-automatic fire provided by a XM110 SASS is a notable improvement.

"They now have a semi-automatic weapon that can shoot out to the ranges of a sniper rifle," he said.

Medic embodies duty, selfless service



Sgt. Jose M. Pantoja

Spc. Matthew Leary
Task Force Fury PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE BERMEL, Afghanistan — While conducting combat operations here in Afghanistan Soldiers may sustain various non-life threatening injuries that are easily treated by a medic on site.

But when Army Sgt. Jose M. Pantoja received a gunshot wound to the head during a firefight near the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan last summer, he was unable to turn to his platoon medic and seek aid, because Pantoja was the platoon medic.

Pantoja and initially wanted to be an infantryman and looked into the possibility of joining the Army, he said. While in the recruiter's office, the idea of being a medic was suggested and Pantoja became interested in the career field.

"I asked what kind of things I would be doing, and it sounded like I would like it," Pantoja said.

And in 2004 he enlisted in the Army as a medic.

Going through Basic Combat Training at Fort Benning, Ga., and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Pantoja said he saw the role a combat medic plays in the field, and was interested in what almost his original career field.

"I was fired up to be with the infantry," Pantoja said.

Pantoja was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division following his training.

"Medics belong to [2-87th Inf. Reg.], but when we deploy we are attached to infantry units," said Army Staff Sgt. Jason M. Morgan, Battalion Treatment noncommissioned officer in charge, for 2-87th Inf. Reg.

When 3rd BCT deployed to Afghanistan in January 2006, Pantoja was attached to Company B, 2-87th Inf. Reg., and got his wish of being officially attached to an infantry company. The assignment meant Pantoja's role within the battalion would change dramatically.

Medics with infantry units have a unique relationship with their infantry counterparts, Morgan said.

"When we go out with the platoons we eat, sleep and pull security with them," Morgan said.

So on June 10, 2006 when the Soldiers of 3rd Platoon, Co. B received direct fire from insurgent forces, Pantoja was right alongside his fellow Soldiers.

The platoon was positioned on a mountaintop observing a likely enemy movement point when the firefight broke out, said Army Pfc. Kyle A. Lewis, a M240B machine gunner with 3rd Platoon.

"It was one of my first missions with the platoon," said Lewis, a native of Chattanooga, Tenn. "It was quiet, and next thing I knew, 10 feet in front of my truck a rocket propelled grenade hit and bullets started flying by."

What ensued, was one of the largest battles 2-87th Inf. Reg. had been involved in during their deployment, said Pantoja.

"They had two squads of fire, and they were trying to maneuver up on us," said Spc. James N. Murray, a grenadier with 3rd Platoon. "It was a pretty well organized attack"

Shortly after the start of the firefight, the platoon had sustained injuries, Pantoja said.

"A gunner ran up to me and said two of our guys our hit," he said.

Pantoja ran up to the two injured casualties and began to administer aid.

"I started to patch them up, and pulling them over to cover," Pantoja said. "The firing got more intense then."

It was at this point, carrying the second Soldier to cover, that Pantoja sustained a gunshot wound to the face.

"I just felt my head turn but it didn't want to turn. I thought I was dead," he said. "I just finished carrying the second guy to cover, and kept on treating the guys."

Lewis, who received shrapnel wound to the hand during the attack, remembers Pantoja running up to treat him showing signs of his injury.

"He had blood all over his face and he ran up to treat my finger," he said.

From then on, Pantoja would continue on with his mission injured.

"He was running around with a huge gash on his face treating all the casualties," said Murray.

The Soldiers on the ground encouraged Pantoja to tend to himself and take cover, but Pantoja continued to administer aid to his injured platoon members.

In all 12 Soldiers were injured, three of them seriously.

As Pantoja helped carry the seriously injured to an incoming medevac helicopter, several servicemembers tried to evacuate him as well. Pantoja refused their suggestions that he leave as well to get his wounds checked out, he said.

"There was no other medic out there, so who else was going to help my guys," Pantoja said. "I didn't want to leave them without a medic on the ground."

When the firefight ended, the platoon took the remaining wounded and headed back to their base.

Pantoja finally sought medical attention for himself upon his return to base.

"The bleeding had stopped, but there was blood all over his face," Morgan said. "He was more worried about all the other Soldiers."

It took 18 stitches to close the wound, and a small scar below his left eye can still be seen today from the injury.

Looking back on the incident, Pantoja still isn't sure why he acted in the way he did.

"I still don't know why I did it, but they were my guys," he said. "When you're a medic you have a bond with these guys."

Pantoja received an Army Commendation Medal with Device for Valor and was awarded the Purple Heart for his actions.

"He's probably one of the best medics I've ever worked with, in 13 years in the Army," said Morgan. "And it's one of the bravest acts I've seen in a long time."

Purple Heart originally awarded for merit

Spc. Matthew Leary

Task Force Fury PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan — As Soldiers stand tall and proud in their Class A Uniforms, ribbons of merit are prominently displayed just to the side of the lapel of their jacket. These ribbons, which represent medals Soldiers have been awarded, signify the accomplishments, service and sacrifice they have made throughout their military career.

And although each decoration may be clearly recognizable to all who serve, the historical significance of each medal may not be well known.

This was the case for Army Sgt. Mark A. Clinger, an anti-armor specialist with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, when he was awarded the Purple Heart. He received the medal, but knew little about it historically.

"I wanted to know what it was all about," Clinger said. "I got it and all I knew was that it had George Washington's face on it."

On his first deployment to Afghanistan, Clinger was injured on Feb. 13, 2004 during an improvised explosive device attack on his convoy here in Afghanistan. Clinger sustained multiple injuries and spent several months at Walter Reed Army Medical Center recovering, he said.

In the aftermath of the event, Clinger became interested in the history and legacy of the medal he had been awarded, he said.

"A lot of people don't understand what it is about," Clinger said. "When they first came up with the award it was an achievement or meritorious medal, similar to the Bronze Star or Silver Star."

The Purple Heart was established by General George Washington at Newburgh, New York on Aug. 7, 1782, during the course of the Revolutionary War, and was at first known as the "Badge of Military Merit," according to www.purpleheart.org, a website dedicated to the history of the award.

"The General, ever desirous to cherish virtuous ambition in his Soldiers, as well as to foster and encourage every species of Military merit, directs that whenever any singularly meritorious action is performed, the author of it shall be permitted to wear on his facings, over the left breast, the figure of a purple heart," Washington wrote in

his general orders that day establishing the badge.

Washington had devised the medal specifically for lower ranking Soldiers. In no other contemporary European Army, including America's, did such a medal exist.

In his writing, Washington spoke about his creation of the medal rewarding all Soldiers military service, regardless of rank.

"The road to glory in a patriot army and a free country is thus open to all," he said.

In accordance with Washington's design, the Badge of Military Merit was designed simply, a figure of a heart made of purple cloth or silk.

After the Revolutionary War, the Badge of Military Merit faded out of use for nearly 150 years. It wasn't until Feb. 22, 1932 that the medal was revived by the U.S. War Department.

It was renamed the Purple Heart, due to the original design by Washington, and the medal's new design, which is still used today, was a product of the imagination of Elizabeth Will, an Army heraldic specialist with the Office of the Quartermaster General.

Out was the perishable cloth award, and in its place was a purple, metallic heart trimmed with gold.

The creators of the modern-day Purple Heart did not overlook George Washington's significance in the creation of the oldest American military decoration.

A bust of George Washington in uniform stands in the middle, and his family coat-of-arms is at the top. On the back of the medal, the words "For Military Merit" are stamped.

The new Purple Heart was not designed solely for those Soldiers wounded in action, but still was for those who displayed meritorious service as intended by Washington. The Army did allow Soldiers who had earned "wounded chevrons", another award started by Washington to all Soldiers who had been wounded in action, to be awarded Purple Hearts for their actions, and this



established a close link between the two decorations.

The Purple Heart became forever associated with blood loss or injury and in 1942 President Franklin D. Roosevelt officially authorized the award for all military personnel injured in combat after December 7, 1941.

Today the Purple Heart is awarded to servicemembers and civilians working for the Armed Services who are injured in a hostile environment, like Clinger was.

A scar can be seen on Clinger's left forearm and above his right eye, and less noticeable is the seven false teeth that are now a part of Clinger's smile due to the attack.

And while Clinger has already been recognized with the Purple Heart for his sacrifices, perhaps more noteworthy is his continued service to his country. Clinger has re-enlisted to stay in the Army twice since then.

"These younger guys need someone who has been through it, to kind of show them the way, so that's why I re-enlisted," Clinger said.

Both of his re-enlistments have been to stay with 2-87th Inf. Reg., the unit he has deployed with twice.

It is perhaps this kind of service Washington envisioned when he introduced the Badge of Military Merit in Newburgh New York, 225 years ago.

So as Soldiers deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq are out on the battlefield, risking their lives and being recognized for their heroism, perhaps they should take time to glean a little historical knowledge about the military heritage of the medals they are awarded, Clinger said.

Knowing the history behind the decorations of the modern day Army, will help Soldiers to fully understand what the medals are about and the sacrifices previously made for them, Clinger said.

Information about the Purple Heart came from www.purpleheart.org. Additional information on the Purple Heart and other military decorations can be found on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs website at www.va.org.

4/73 CAV conducts operation “Khels Fury”

Pfc. Micah E. Clare

Task Force Fury PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SHARANA, Afghanistan — The 82nd Airborne Division’s Task Force Fury launched a counterinsurgency operation in late March to provide a more secure environment to tribal communities in a remote province of eastern Afghanistan.

The 4th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment kicked off “Operation Khels Fury,” named for the many districts in the province of Paktika with names ending in “Khel”.

The operation, conducted shortly after the 4-73rd’s arrival in the area, has a two-fold goal, connecting the local population to their government and separating the population from the enemy, said Maj. Jason Smallfield, executive officer for 4-73 Cav.

“We want to transform this environment by allowing the tribes here to provide for their own security, and by reducing the Taliban infrastructure,” Smallfield explained. “This will improve governance, commerce and security for the people.”

Until 2007, Paktika Province has been known as an area with much instability between its many tribes. This has allowed the Taliban much freedom of movement, but due to the efforts of the provincial governor in the past six months, many of these tribes have reunified and now support their government.

Now the job of weeding out the remaining dissidents remains.

“We’ve come out here to find the enemy,” said Lt. Adam Taliaferro, platoon leader for 3rd Platoon, Troop B.

For several days, Taliaferro’s platoon had



Sgt. Nicholas Heurich, a dismount team leader in 3rd Platoon, Troop B, 4th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, scouts the road ahead during a patrol near a small village in Paktika Province, Afghanistan.



Photos by Pfc. Micah E. Clare/Task Force Fury PAO

Paratroopers from 3rd Platoon, Troop B, 4th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, prepare their vehicles for a night trip across the rugged terrain of Paktika Province, Afghanistan.

been patrolling the rural district of Dila, an area that hasn’t seen any real military presence in two years.

“There’s a shadow government here,” he explained. “For every police chief and district commissioner, there’s a Taliban equivalent. There isn’t much fighting, but because it’s so open the enemy has free room to maneuver into other areas.”

“Our presence helps to reassure the local populace,” said Pfc. Daniel Harvey, a driver in 3rd Platoon who was recently in the nearby Yosof Khail district. “By the time we left, the bazaar there was twice as full as when we got there.”

The 4-73rd Cav. hopes to maintain pressure on the enemy by keeping a sustained presence in key districts.

“We want to gain the trust of the people by staying there instead of patrolling an area and not coming back for two weeks,” Smallfield said.

When the plans for this operation were on the drawing board, the 4-73rd Cav, which was formed not 8 months before deploying, had to address a lack of intelligence on the enemy, lack of unification of the populace, and the need to flex the squadron’s muscles for the first time in combat, Smallfield explained.

The operation was designed to solve all of these problems at the same time by promoting Shuras, or tribal meetings, forming personal relationships with the locals, and conducting squadron operations, he said.

To protect the reconstruction efforts between Ghazni, Gardez, and Sharana, the 4-73rd Cav planned to interdict any enemy forces coming through the area to Highway One, one of the few paved roads in the country.

The terrain of this area is a series of mountains overlooking valleys and is an ideal place for the cavalry to conduct such a mission, Smallfield said.

The cavalry mission is to go fast, go far, develop the situation, and be the eyes and ears; combined with the mobility of our vehicles and our long range surveillance capabilities, this is a perfect place for the cavalry,” he said.

The 4-73rd Cav has also been focusing on working together with the Afghan National Army and Police, who have seen much peace and stability in the area since arriving.

“The reaction of the people to our presence is positive,” said Sgt. Abdullah Hab a soldier of an ANA reconnaissance platoon that is working together with Taliaferro’s platoon in Dila district. “They want to help us, because there is peace that comes along with security. They give us information about when and where the Taliban are coming and going.”

“The long term key to success is the active and enthusiastic support of the population for what we’re trying to do,” Smallfield said. “We won’t need to be everywhere, because they will take care of the enemy for us.”

By unifying the people, earning their support and partnering with ANA and ANP, the conditions are being set for a stable Afghan government, he said.

The operation doesn’t have an end point and the 4-73rd Cav will continue to keep a certain percentage of its forces dedicated to keeping the enemy’s head down.

“We’re keeping constant pressure on the enemy,” Smallfield said. “Counterinsurgencies aren’t won by hammer strikes; they’re won by putting the enemy’s finger into a vice and cranking it down.”

Kansas native lives up Superman persona

Pfc. Micah E. Clare

Task Force Fury PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SHARANA, Afghanistan — You're not in Kansas anymore, Sgt. Weigle!

Looking out over the rugged, mountainous countryside of Afghanistan filled with mud houses, children with no shoes and men with brightly colored turbans, Army Sgt. Bill Weigle's world had gotten a lot bigger since leaving his central Kansas hometown.

"Some of these little Afghan villages have more people than my home town," said Weigle, a cavalry scout gunner in 3rd platoon, Troop B, 4th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division.

Weigle was born and raised on a farm in Ness, Kansas where he spent many hours a day on tractors, combines, and trucks plowing and harvesting the fields.

"I love Kansas," Weigle says. "It's where superman grew up!"

Now, at the age of 26, Weigle spends most of his days sitting behind a .50 caliber machine gun on top of an armored vehicle, watching as the rural fields of eastern Afghanistan fly by in an endless blur of dust, rocks, irrigation trenches and waving villagers.

Still, this country on the other side of the world can remind him of home sometimes.

"In fields like this, I and a dozen or so of my buddies would gather around for a pasture party," Weigle remembered as the 3rd platoon stopped their convoy for the night, maneuvering their vehicles into a circle to set up camp. "We'd drop the tailgate of the pickup truck, get out the grill, and start up a big bonfire."

Of course, being in a small town, he found ways to get in trouble with his other friends.

"I used to be pretty mischievous when I was at home," he said, remembering the time he and his friends got in trouble for putting fish in the school air vents.

"We got a couple of days off of school after that!"

Even though he had many good times at home, Weigle always felt an itch for adventure in life.

"When I was 12 years old, I saw 'Indiana Jones and The Temple of Doom,'" he said. "I wanted to be the next Indiana Jones, traveling all over the world finding priceless little artifacts."

He spent a few years working on oil rigs in nearby states, but at the age of 21, he joined the Army.

The world was about to open up before him.

"My first assignment was in Germany," Weigle recalled. "A lot of people in my generation are always talking about how great it would be to drop everything for a month and see the world; I did on the spur of the moment for four years."

During his time in Europe, Weigle travelled all over Germany, Holland, France, Spain, Austria, Italy, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Ireland.

"Some people plan their entire lives to do things; it took me and my friends about five minutes to decide whether or not to go to Rome," he said.

Weigle even had an opportunity to visit Israel.

"It wasn't very fun though," he groaned. "We spent most of our time there building a parking lot out of sandbags."

His family back in Kansas missed him after being gone for so

long.

"Sometimes, I made them pretty mad growing up, but they really wanted me back," he said

After four years overseas, Weigle was finally told that he was returning to America.

"I was pretty excited to be going back," he said.

It turned out that his new assignment was to be in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, with a newly formed cavalry unit in the 82nd Airborne Division.

"It sounded like it was going to be pretty quiet, until I sat down to the newcomer's brief, and they told us that the unit was being deployed to Afghanistan in less than a month," Weigle remembered.

Four months later, he was in the middle of "Operation Khels Fury," part of a counterinsurgency operation by the 82nd Airborne Division's Task Force Fury to separate Taliban infiltrators from the peaceful population of several remote districts in the province of Paktika.

In that short amount of time, Weigle has already become an integral part of 3rd platoon.

"For someone who joined the platoon a month before deploying, he showed a lot of character and class," said Lt. Adam Taliaferro, platoon leader, 3rd Platoon. "He has really ingrained himself in the team."

He even brings his sense of hometown Kansas life to the rest of the team.

"He gives us the best jerkey he gets from home," said Sgt. Nicholas Heurich, a team leader in 3rd platoon. "It's delicious!"

"My dad makes it for me," Weigle laughed. "It's been one of his hobbies he's picked up over the years."

"He's one of the best non-commissioned officer's we've got," Heurich continued. "He always taking care of things, leading his Soldiers, and keeping his truck in good condition in the maintenance bay."

"I love working on trucks, but my driver is starting to push that to the limits," he said jokingly, referring to the extremely rough terrain they travel over.

During the many breaks and stops they make in the villages throughout the countryside, Weigle has the chance to interact with the Afghan soldiers and villagers.

When the children ask for his name through a translator, Weigle has a ready answer.

"Clark Kent," he says with a big grin on his face.

"I figure if they meet someone from Kansas, it should be somebody famous," he says.

No matter where he goes, Weigle keeps a positive attitude about life.

"There are good days and bad days, people you get along with, and some people you don't," he said.

"No matter what we're going through or how bad it is, you can always look to him to help you feel better," said Pfc. Mychal Prieto another 3rd Platoon gunner. "When everyone's mad, he'll be the one with a smile still on his face."

"I can't change anything in life," Weigle said. "I just do my best to help other people get through it."

Weigle one day hopes to live in Colorado, where he can finally spend time enjoying his favorite sport; skiing.

Connecticut Guard Soldiers reflect on year in Afghanistan

Sgt. Matthew Clifton

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE GARDEZ, Afghanistan — Whether serving on active duty, Army Reserve, or Army National Guard, deploying has become all but an inevitability for Soldiers in the United States Army.

Some troops have seen more years in Iraq or Afghanistan than they have seen at their home station, while some Soldiers are going through their first deployment in support of the Global War on Terrorism. But regardless of if a Soldier is on their first or fourth deployment, war does not discriminate between the two.

The Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 102nd Infantry Regiment, Connecticut National Guard are weeks away from completing their first tour of duty in Afghanistan.

There have been good times and bad times for the troops of Company A, 1-102nd. And although some active duty Soldiers would have them believe battle for a National Guard Soldier is different, these infantry men have seen the aggression of war first hand and know there is no such difference.

Alpha Co. arrived at Forward Operating Base Gardez on April 18, 2006 and was immediately put to work, said Sgt. John Julian, team leader, 1st Platoon, Co. A.

Although this deployment is Julian's first, he is no stranger to serving overseas for the military. Having spent eight years in the Marine Corps working with aircraft Julian has seen duty in Japan, Australia,

Alaska and Egypt.

Fort Worth, Texas, however, is one station he remembers above them all. This is where Julian was during the Sept. 11th attacks on the World Trade Center.

"I was pulling an ejection seat out of an F-16 Fighter Jet when the whole base went on lock down," he said. "I was so [angry] something like that could happen on our own soil, and immediately my thoughts went to my grandfather who enlisted in the infantry after the attack on Pearl Harbor."

Immediately after the base was locked down, Julian remembers loading the same jet with live ordnance.

Julian tried to change jobs and join the infantry, but the Marine Corps wouldn't allow him to because of how much money they had spent training him to work with aircrafts.

"When my service in the Corps was over, I went to the Army to see if they would let me join an Infantry unit," Julian explained. "I was able to join the [Conn. Natl. Guard] and then we came to Afghanistan."

Julian has no regrets about what he did, and plans on re-enlisting in the Marines when he gets back to the U.S.

"I'm happy with what I did here," he continued. "I served my

country for a year, and I enjoy life in the military."

No doubt there were some good times for Julian and his comrades, but those good times were not without some very hard ones.

Alpha Company was attached to a Provincial Reconstruction Team upon arriving

at FOB Gardez. A PRT's mission is to facilitate the reconstruction of their assigned provinces through projects like the building of roads, schools and medical clinics.

However, the mission of Co. A. is to provide security for these troops when they go out to conduct reconstruction missions, and the enemy could care less why a Soldier is out of the wire.

"[The enemy] doesn't care if your in the National Guard or if your not on a combat mission," said Staff Sgt. Richard Rafferty, team leader, 1st Plt., Co. A. "We get attacked just like anyone else does."

This was most apparent on Nov. 2nd 2006 when Rafferty, Julian and their brothers in 1st. Plt. were out on a seemingly normal mission.

"We were out by the Pakistan border when we got tasked to take on an additional side mission," Rafferty said. "We were ambushed with Rocket Propelled Grenades and small arms fire on both sides of the convoy."

One of the platoon's two crew serve weapons was disabled along with the HUMVEE it was attached to. The gunner of that weapon was severely injured along with the driver of the vehicle, Rafferty said.

"We returned fire until [the enemy] broke contact, then we immediately gave aid to the wounded," he continued. "Luckily no one was fatally injured, and only one of our guys couldn't come back to duty."

Thinking back on the multiple attacks Co. A. has endured while deployed, Rafferty and Julian still keep a positive attitude.

"When you get to see things like schools and orphanages being built it really feels rewarding," Julian said. "Knowing that the locals are driving out the insurgents and coming to us for help is the main reason we are here."

Rafferty recollects the lack of any paved roads in their area when Co. A first deployed. Now there are roads spanning much of the province he has helped protect and improve.

First platoon's last mission was to provide security for a groundbreaking ceremony in the city of Salam Khail.

Now the only thing standing between them and a completed deployment where every Soldier made it home is a convoy to Bagram Air Base to catch a plane headed straight for the United States, their families and normal life.



Photo by Sgt. Matthew Clifton/22nd MPAD

Staff Sgt. Richard Rafferty, team leader, 1st Squad, Company A, 1st Battalion, 102nd Infantry Regiment, Connecticut National Guard, jokingly haggles with a local Afghan boy over the price of a pack of biscuits March 26, 2007 in the city of Gardez, Afghanistan.

Governor, PRT break ground on new school

Sgt. Matthew Clifton

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

SALAM KHAIL, Afghanistan – The governor of the Paktya Province, village elders and the commander of the Gardez Provincial Reconstruction Team gathered here March 26 to participate in a groundbreaking ceremony marking the beginning of construction for a new schoolhouse.

The ceremony is the product of months of planning and coordination between the Gardez PRT, Task Force Fury and the Paktya Province government.

It will still be a few months before the school is ready to open, but when it does, it will provide basic education to many Afghan children who live in the village, said Sgt. Merrill White, civil affairs sergeant, Gardez PRT.

“We did a [humanitarian aid] drop last summer, and the elders expressed a need for a school in their district,” White said. “After



Photos by Sgt. Matthew Clifton/22nd MPAD

A local farmer lends out his tractor for a groundbreaking ceremony commemorating the site of a future schoolhouse March 26, 2007 in the village of Salam Khail, Afghanistan.

they came to us, it was our job to start the process of seeking funding for a school in that area.”

There was a very deliberate process that had to be followed to ensure the school would be built.

“In situations like this the village elders or director of public education usually proposes the project to us,” said Air Force Lt. Col. Tracey Meck, commander, Gardez PRT. “We

had to discuss where the school would be built, who owns the land, how big of a school is needed and numerous other specifics.”

After the PRT surveys the proposed site for any factors that might conflict with construction, they must find out how important this project is on the list of priorities the governor of the province has.

“For example, there are 132 schools that need to be built in Paktya alone,” Meck explained. “Why is this school more important than the 131 others? So we ask the Afghans what their priorities are.”

This project was chosen because of how good the security and cooperation with the government is in the district, Meck said.

“We wanted to do something for them to show that we and their government appreciate how well they work with us,” she said. “They do not allow the enemy to work in their area, so this was basically a thank you to them.”

Meck remembers when she first arrived in Afghanistan and the village was not getting a lot of support because of how secure it was.

“We were putting a lot of money into the areas that had enemy activity,” she said. “We had always told the people that security brings reconstruction, so the people of Salam Khail were feeling lied to.”

So the school was built to show that their government does appreciate and support their efforts, she said.

The school is only the beginning of a major plan to help reconstruct the village.

A major hydro-electric power plant has recently been approved for Salam Khail.

“The plant will be strong enough to supply electricity for 1000 homes,” Meck continued. “This is a project that will really set up an economic foundation for them.”

The reconstruction of the provinces in Afghanistan will not be completed over night. It is important to just keep chipping away at them until the job is finally done, White said.



Governor Rakmatulloh Rahmot, governor of the Paktya Province gives a speech during a groundbreaking ceremony for a new schoolhouse March 26, 2007 in the village of Salam Khail, Afghanistan.

Operation Cat Fury purrs in Paktika

Spc. Matthew Leary

Task Force Fury PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE BERMEL, Afghanistan — Soldiers from Task Force Fury, with the support of the Afghan National Army, conducted Operation Cat Fury here in Afghanistan March 29-April 2.

A five-day mission along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border aimed at interdicting the movement of terrorists and munitions into Afghanistan.

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division led the effort, setting up vehicle checkpoints, conducting dismounted patrols along mountain ridgelines and destroying enemy shelters.

“The purpose of Operation Cat Fury was to get back into the areas the enemy has historically operated out of,” said Army Capt. Jason R. Dye, commander of Company B, 2-87th Inf. Reg. “We wanted to get a head start on this operational season.”

The Soldiers of 2-87th Inf. Reg. were well versed with the operational area, having spent the past 14 months in Afghanistan, a factor which increases their proficiency in conducting operations like this, said Army Staff Sgt. Jeffrey A. Hall, a squad leader with Co. B.

Although Soldiers conducted numerous vehicle checkpoints, a large portion of the mission was dismounted patrols.

“You got to have people on the ground walking the area,” Hall explained. “Your objective cannot be complete without ground forces.”

This required the troops to scale steep mountains, a task that brought about numerous obstacles.

“The terrain is deceptive,” Dye said. “It doesn’t look too bad, but the area is large, mountainous and inhospitable.”

Taking the time to search these remote areas is crucial, however, during missions, Hall said.

In one area inaccessible to vehicles along the border multiple rudimentary living structures were discovered and subsequently destroyed.



Photos by Spc. Matthew B. Leary/Task Force Fury PAO

Spc. James N. Murray, a grenadier with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, stands watch as two members of his platoon search the interior of a local transport truck here in Afghanistan. The vehicle checkpoint set up along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border was part of Operation Cat Fury, a mission aimed at stopping the flow of enemy fighters and munitions from coming into Afghanistan.

Shelters such as these are used by enemy fighters to camouflage themselves from aircraft, Afghan National Security Force elements and International Security Assistance Forces, Dye said.

The assistance of the ANA during the operation was a benefit to both militaries, Dye added.

“Using them in our operation, one gives us additional combat power, and gives them an opportunity to work side-by-side with us and increase their military professionalism,” he said.

Also, with their familiarity with the area, the ANA is capable of noticing elements of the terrain that are out of place or simply do not look right, Dye said.

This type of information can be crucial during combat operations.

While no significant enemy activity was discovered, the mission allowed the troops to establish their presence in the area and deter future activity, Dye said.

The border areas have traditionally been areas terrorists operate out of.

“They know we’re not scared to go into their house,” confirmed Sgt. 1st Class Gregory G. Greeson, acting 3rd Platoon Leader for Co. B. “It should keep them from re-establishing in the area.”



A Soldier from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, pulls security during Operation Cat Fury April 1.

2Fury medics assist, train at Miri clinic

Pfc. Micah E. Clare

Task Force Fury PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE GHAZNI, Afghanistan — The long lines of patients waiting outside the Miri District Hospital are evidence enough that the four doctors there see and treat overwhelming numbers of people every day.

However, without the proper equipment and training they can only do so much, which is why Paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division are stepping in to help remedy the situation.

During a series of visits to the free clinic, Paratroopers from 3rd Platoon, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team Firebase based at Firebase Miri, worked on making arrangements for a Medical Education Civil Action Program to bring better medical supplies and training to the understaffed, under-equipped hospital.

At a recent district meeting, the local Ministry of Health talked about how poor the health system in the area was, explained Army 1st Lt. Jonathan Lum, platoon leader for 3rd Plt.

“We checked it out and recommended to

our chain of command that we do a Medcap there,” he said.

O n t h e i r s e c o n d f o l l o w u p v i s i t t o t h e h o s p i t a l M a r c h 27, L u m m e t w i t h s e v e r a l o f t h e h o s p i t a l s t a f f, a n d a s k e d t h e m a b o u t

the challenges they face, and what they needed to help overcome those challenges themselves.

“We see from 250 to 300 people a day,” said Dr. Habib Ullah, a doctor at the clinic.

People travel to the clinic from many miles away, because it is free, he explained.

Ullah and his staff are faced with many different medical cases such as orthopedic injuries, birth complications and appendicitis, just to name a few.

It is a challenge to properly treat them all due to their lack of properly trained nurses,

and adequate supplies.

“If someone needs training, they have to go to Kabul or Ghazni for a month or two; we need the training for our staff, but we don’t have the time to spare for anyone to be gone that long,” he said.

“The overall goal and intent is to make sure the people can take care of themselves.”

***1st Lt. Jonathan Lum
3rd Platoon Leader, Company A
2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment***

Many of the people here are also resistant to medicines like penicillin, because the clinic only has low quality drugs, Ullah said.

Lum spoke with Ullah about the program to bring medical training and better medical supplies to the clinic.

“The program is going to help the doctors get education as well as medical supplies and training, so they can be more self-sufficient,” Lum said.

Preventative medicine classes, how to give vaccinations and fight malaria, are some of the training that can be made available to the doctors of the clinic, he said.

The doctors and staff will be given more training in general surgery or orthopedics.

During a three day class, the staff and nurses will be given emergency medical technician level training either at Ghazni or at the clinic, said Lt. Jeremiah Walker, medical platoon leader for 2nd Bn., 508th PIR in Ghazni.

“The nurses mainly need trauma training,” Walker said. “The Ministry of Health has been seeing a lot of physical trauma related injuries.”

Through the program, there are also plans to provide mentorship for the surgeons in the future, allowing Task Force Fury medical practitioners to work with them at their clinics, he said.

By giving the doctors this knowledge, it gives them a chance to help their own people better, Lum said.

“The overall goal and intent is to make sure the people can take care of themselves,” he said. “We want to make sure the clinic can do these things, so people will want to come to their own clinics.”



Photo by Pfc. Micah E. Clare/Task Force Fury PAO

Lt. Jonathan Lum, platoon leader for 3rd platoon, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, discusses with Doctor Habib Ullah the need for medical training at the hospital at the Miri district hospital in Ghazni province, Afghanistan.

TF Catamount keeps high spirits, ch

Spc. Matthew Leary

Task Force Fury PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE ORGUN-E, Afghanistan- Used to extended missions and unforeseen complications the Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, embarked on a mission March 22 a few hours after daybreak but they wouldn't return until well after nightfall, the mission having lasted over 13 hours.

Many Soldiers chalk it up to what has become a popular term within the platoon; Murphy's Law.

On the way out to a remote outpost to deliver supplies, the convoy was held up by several civilian vehicles stuck in the mud.

The same mud-laden roads that stopped the flow of civilian trucks slowed down the military vehicles as they went up and down hills and crossed small streams. And just as the platoon was almost back to their home, two vehicles experienced a mechanical breakdown, one requiring extensive work.

So as the light faded and the weather turned cold, the Soldiers joked about the situation.

Someone realized they might miss Mexican night at the dining facility, and this set off a heated debate about what good Mexican food is.

This situation is familiar to the unit, the plan changing midway through a mission, said Spc. Justin M. Ray, a rifleman with 1st Platoon, Co C.

"It's Murphy's Law," confirmed Army Sgt. Jordan L. Ansley, a team leader in 3rd Squad, 1st Platoon. "Anything that can go wrong will go wrong."

But for Ansley, a native of Twin Falls, Idaho, nothing proved the theory of Murphy's Law like the extension of their entire Brigade in January.

In early January, the 4th BCT, 82nd Airborne Division began deploying to Afghanistan to replace the Soldiers 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div., who were finishing a year-long deployment. In late

January, the Department of Defense announced Command- East here in Afghanistan.

Instead of one brigade covering the area, two the combat effectiveness within the area.

So although the 4th BCT, 82nd Airborne BCT, 10th Mtn., they became a supplementary

This meant 2-87th Inf. and the rest of 3rd B extra four months as Soldiers from the 173rd A

The Soldiers went from being weeks away fr

"It was definitely a surprise," said Army Sgt gunner with 3rd Squad and native of Flint, Mich

But the Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Co. C quickl hand, Putnam said.

"We've been through worse," he added, sp mountains of Afghanistan. "Being here a little e Nothing goes exactly as planned. So this was no

The extension was a perfect example of Mu diers grouped together and made the best out of

The platoon continued on with the missions ened by the extension.

It's been two months since the extension, 14 and 1st Platoon, Co C. is still conducting patrol

"In nine days it will be one full year, straigh Ansley took his R&R leave early on the deployo days in a combat zone as a result of the extensio

"I think they handled it better than most," toon Sergeant. "Everyone probably thinks that they're the best, but they are the tightest."

A majority of the platoon has been training and it was this close-knit community of Soldier platoon. Over ten members of the 1st Platoon ment to Operation Enduring Freedom in 2004.

"These are like your brothers right here," s time with Co. C. "So this deployment, even tho member that this is the Army, and we are at war

The high spirits seen as they prepare to go their vehicles in the motor pool, or simply spend all be traced back to one thing, Ray said.

"It's all about the guy to your left and to you a quote from the popular war movie "Black Haw

"Civilians will never understand that bond, ed.

"I don't think anybody would have gone ba platoon went home," Lassally said. "They are pr another."

"Amazingly enough, considering what they they are still re-enlisting," Lassally said. "We an ment, with 70 percent of that being to stay in th

Even though they are separate from their know they are doing something worth while in

"It's what we signed up for, and it's why I ju

And more importantly than serving their motivates the Soldiers to stay part of the team.

"They would rather get deployed together, with," Lassally explained. .

"We are a tight group of guys," confirmed A



Photos by Spc. Matthew B. Leary/Task Force Fury PAO

A Soldier from 1st Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, pulls security during a convoy here in Afghanistan Mar. 22.

talks extension up to 'Murphy's Law'

and an increased force structure plan for Regional

to brigades would split the battle space, doubling

Division arrived as a replacement force for 3rd Force.

CT, 10th Mtn., would stay in Afghanistan for an Airborne Brigade prepared to relieve them.

from returning home, to being four-months out.

t. Craig R. Putnam, a squad automatic weapon's n. "A lot of guys were down at first."

ly rallied together and focused on the mission at

speaking about enduring grueling missions in the extra time didn't make that much of a difference.

o different."

murphy's Law in action, Ansley said. But the Sol- f the situation, keeping unit morale high.

they were given, their spirits only slightly damp-

months since the beginning of their deployment s and going out on convoys.

ht through, that I have been here," Ansley said.

ment, and will serve more than 400 consecutive n.

said Sgt. 1st Class Gonzalo E. Lassally, 1st Pla- their platoon is the best, so I am not going to say

together for over a year and a half, Putnam said, s that acted as a support mechanism within the

have been together since the unit's first deploy-

said Ray, who is in Afghanistan for the second ough it's long, it's like your family. People re-

t. Anything can happen."

out on convoys, work on

and time in their rooms can

ar right," he says, sampling

rk Down."

how deep it is," Ray add-

ck home, unless the whole

practically family to one and

y have been put through,

re at a 90 percent re-enlist-

e unit."

wives and children, they

the Army, Ray said.

st re-enlisted," he said.

country, the bond they have within their unit

with the same group of guys they have deployed

my Sgt. Mark T. Clinger an anti-armor specialist



Staff Sgt. Sean Lepper, a squad leader with 1st Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, pulls security during a stop in the convoy he is in Mar. 22.

with the platoon.

Clinger, who has been in 1st Platoon for over three years and two deployments to Afghanistan, is a perfect example of the bond within 1st Platoon, Co. C.

In 2004, while deployed with 1st Platoon to Afghanistan the first time, Clinger was involved in an improvised explosives device attack that killed one of his fellow platoon members and sent him to the hospital for several months.

Today, Clinger still shows signs of the attack that almost took his life, with a permanent scar on his left forearm and above his right eye.

"These younger guys need someone who has been through it, to kind of show them the way, so that's why I re-enlisted," Clinger said. "I've re-enlisted twice now."

The Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Co. C, 2-87th Inf. Reg., return to FOB Orgun-E Mar. 22 after dark, knowing another mission awaits them in the following days. They have missed Mexican night at the dining facility.

Tomorrow, Friday, they will clean and service their vehicles so they can be ready to go out on a convoy again on Saturday, Ray said.

The Soldiers can be heard laughing as they walk back to their barracks.

"They have taken [the extension] well," said 1st Lt. William L. Felder, 1st Platoon Leader, Co. C. "There are things everyone wants to go home for, but they know its mission first."

Just as this convoy returned home to FOB Orgun-E later than expected, the Soldiers will return home to Fort Drum, N.Y., a little later than expected.

And although both missions ran long, the Soldiers of 1st Platoon carry on with a high-level of morale and camaraderie within, Ansley said.

Murphy's Law will affect only their timetable; it will not affect the platoons spirit or commitment to the mission. The platoon is capable of handling any other unexpected thing thrown their way, said Felder.

"If we get extended again, we'll do the best job we can," he said, "and that's the bottom line."

"There are things everyone wants to go home for, but they know its mission first."

**1st Lt. William L. Felder
Platoon Leader
Company C, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment**

FURY FOTOS



Photo by Pfc. Micah E. Clare/Task Force Fury PAO

Tribal elders from the province of Pakitika, Afghanistan listen as the provincial Governor gives the first "State of Paktika Address", held at Sharana city, April 7.



Photo by Pfc. Micah E. Clare/Task Force Fury PAO

Spc. Alexander Vasquez, squad automatic gunner in 3rd Platoon, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, pulls security outside of the Miri district hospital in Ghazni province, Afghanistan, during a visit to determine the facility's medical needs.



Pfc. Mychal Prieto, a gunner in 3rd Platoon, Troop B, 4th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, takes a break after a long day of patrols in Paktika Province, Afghanistan.

Photo by
Pfc. Micah E. Clare/
Task Force Fury PAO



Photo by Pfc. Micah E. Clare/Task Force Fury PAO

Paratroopers from 3rd Platoon, Troop B, 4th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, investigate suspicious activity, April 15, near a small village in Paktika Province, Afghanistan.



Photo by Pfc. Micah E. Clare/Task Force Fury PAO

Afghan National Policemen stand guard during a Shura meeting by the Suleiman Khel tribe of Paktika province in the town of Yayakhel. The tribe hasn't been unified in over 10 years.



Photo by Pfc. Micah E. Clare/Task Force Fury PAO

A United States flag on the antenna of a vehicle from 3rd Platoon, Troop B, 4th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, waves in the evening breeze, April 15, in Paktika Province, Afghanistan.

Lest we forget



Sgt. Alexander van Aalten
Company D, 1/508th PIR
September 2, 1985 - April 20, 2007

Sgt. Alexander Van Aalten, 21, was an Infantryman with Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

Sgt. Van Aalten originally from Monterey, Tennessee was assigned to 3rd Battalion 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment upon his arrival to Fort Bragg in December 2004. He deployed in September 2005 through January 2006 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom where he earned his Combat Infantryman Badge.

Sgt. Van Aalten's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, Army Achievement Medal with oak leaf cluster, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Iraqi Campaign Medal, Overseas Service Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge and Basic Parachutist Badge.

Sgt. Van Aalten is survived by his wife Shana De Ann, his mother Susan and his Father Edward.



Staff Sgt. Casey D. Combs
2/508th PIR
April 4, 1979 - April 12, 2007

Staff Sgt. Casey D. Combs, 28, was an Infantryman with 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment,

Staff Sgt. Combs, originally from Auburn, Washington, was assigned to the 325th Parachute Infantry Battalion from November 2002 to June 2006, and was reassigned to the 2nd Battalion 508th PIR, upon the 325th being deactivated. Combs' is also a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Staff Sgt. Combs awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge and Basic Parachutist Badge.

Staff Sgt. Combs is survived by his wife Amber, his daughter Hallie, his son Trenton, his father Robert and his mother Lillian.



Sgt. David A. Stephens
Company B, 2/508th PIR
November 9, 1978 - April 12, 2007

Sgt. David A. Stephens, 28, was a Combat Medic with 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

Sgt. Stephens, a 2002 graduate of Tennessee University, originally from Florida, enlisted in the Army in March 2005 and arrived at Fort Bragg in February 2006 where he was assigned to the 325th PIR, until the unit was re-flagged.

Sgt. Stephens' awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, Combat Medical Badge, Expert Field Medical Badge, Basic Parachutist Badge and Air Assault Badge.

Sgt. Stephens is survived by his wife Megan, daughter Sienna and his father Charles.



Spc. Agustin Gutierrez
Company B, 782nd BSB
June 9, 1987 - March 28, 2007



Sgt. Edmund W. McDonald
Company B, 782nd BSB
March 14, 1982 - March 28, 2007

“Fury Fit” to Fight the Good Fight

“Mo-Mo-Mo-Mo-Mo-Motivation!” I still hear the Drill Sergeant singing the ballad as his formation responds in kind.

But, what happens when one has a really bad day? A day in which there is no motivation to be found? A day where one just cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel or loses sight of the purpose? We’ve had those days this past month. The proof is three Memorial Ceremonies. Even in those days there is hope and encouragement to keep going – to fight the good fight.

“Mo-Mo-Mo-Mo-Mo-Momentum!” Hmm, not quite the same melodic ring. However, I have thought for some time that momentum is what we truly rely on rather than motivation. If we wait for motivation to strike us in some divine or supernatural way we may be waiting... well, till we redeploy.

However, if I can remember that today is not only possible, but it is significant because of yesterday I can rely on something within that has always been. Today is possible because of the day before. This week is doable since I did last week.

It’s easier to steer a moving car than a parked one. Motivation doesn’t help that jalopy. Momentum does.

In this past month we have learned that three or four more months in paradise may be in store for us. Each may have a different perspective and way of managing such information. To some it may have come as a surprise. Others have mused “I saw it coming.” One thing is for certain: It’s no surprise to God. Proverbs 20:24 reads “A man’s steps are directed by the LORD.”

Since God is the King of Momentum – OK, I’ve never heard God called that before either – I choose, and encourage you, to rely on the One who has always been. It is a huge source of momentum and motivation when you know you are supposed to be wherever you find yourself.

Peace...

Chaplain Larry Pundt
Task Force Fury

Please continue to keep in prayer the families of SGT McDonald, SPC Gutierrez, SSG Combs, SGT Stephens, and SGT VanAalten.



Paratroopers from the 4th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, help pull out their teammate after searching a hole in Paktika Province, Afghanistan. (Photo by Pfc. Micah E. Clare/Task Force Fury PAO)